

POLI-3313 FA: African Politics

Course Outline

Fall 2016

Instructor: Dr Zubairu Wai

Office: BB 1057

Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 12:00PM – 2:00PM (or by appointment)

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Meeting: Tuesday & Thursday, 10:00AM-11:30AM, RB-1021

Course Description

In mainstream discourses, 'Africa' is a disaster story; a homogenised and undifferentiated state inhabited by primitive tribes where a tragic human history stands revealed. A land of crisis and failure, this 'Africa' is constantly depicted as a moral challenge to the West, and a basket-case needing the redemptive power of Western modernist intervention. Do these broad-stroke stereotypical generalisations represent the African condition, or do they obscure the historical realities of political and social life on the continent? What kind of place is Africa? How do we understand its social and political formations? Does Africa have any meaningful political life? These are the types of questions that grounds this course. Seeking to move beyond the problematic discourses that tend to obscure the epistemological, power/political and material processes that have historically constituted the continent's experience in a world characterised by unequal power relations, the course aims to provide a broad critical introduction to African politics by interrogating the dominant ways we have come to understand the continent's historical and contemporary realities. From a postcolonial and critical theory perspective, the course raises important questions about power and politics, war and violence, epistemology and ethics, and identity and subjectivities. It explores African politics from a broader socio-historical perspective focusing on the processes that have shaped the continent's present day reality. At the heart of the course is a simple but fundamental question: What is Africa and what is its place in the world?

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students should:

- Have a critical and broad understanding of African politics and the historical forces that have shaped its reality.
- Be conversant with the dominant debates in African politics and have the conceptual and theoretical language to critically analyse politics on the continent;
- Understand the relationships between global power and its implications for Africa;
- Be able to place contemporary African politics in larger historical frameworks and understand the forces that continue to shape the continent and its present day reality.

- Have a critical understanding of the power-knowledge regimes that shape discourses on and about African politics
- Appreciate the historical connections between Africa and the world as well as its place in the world.

Required Texts:

Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*; a novel (London: Heinemann, 1958)

POLI-3313 Course Kit

Course Requirements and Evaluation

The method of instruction will be lectures and class discussions. Students are required to regularly attend classes; do the assigned readings before coming to class; take part in class discussions; and complete the required assignments for the course.

The final grade will be weighted as follows:

Attendance & Participation:	20%
Map Quiz:	20%
Book Review:	25%
Final Essay:	35%

1. Attendance & Participation (worth 20% of the final grade):

Attendance and participation are crucial to the success of the course. Students are required to regularly attend classes, do the assigned readings before coming to class and take part in class discussions. A register of attendance will be kept throughout the duration of the course.

2. Map Quiz (worth 20% of the final grade):

The map quiz is intended to test the knowledge about the continent's political geography. It will mainly involve correctly identifying the countries of the continent, their capitals and general demographic features. The quiz will take place in class on **October 20**.

3. Book Review (worth 25% of the final grade):

The focus of the book review is to critically review one African novel (from the list provided below), bringing out its political significance and demonstrating how it helps us in understanding contemporary African political life. It is an opportunity for linking the fictionalised rendition of African political life in novels with the realities of contemporary African politics. It is also a way of getting students to acquire the skills of undertaking academic reviews of texts. The review should be 5 double-spaced pages long, on one of the following novels:

1. Aminatta Forna, *The Devil that Danced on Water: A Daughter's Memoir* (London: Flamingo 2003)
2. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *A Grain of Wheat* (London: Heinemann, 1967)
3. Mongo Beti, *The Poor Christ of Bomba* (London: Heinemann, 1971)
4. Chinua Achebe, *Anthills of the Savannah* (London: Heinemann, 1987)

5. Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche, *Half of a Yellow Sun* (London: Harper Perennial, 2007)
6. Uzodinma Iweala, *Beasts of No Nation* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2005)
7. Chinua Achebe, *A Man of the People* (London: Heinemann, 1966)
8. Mariam Ba, *So Long a Letter* (London: Heinemann, 1989)
9. Ayi Kwei Armah, *The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born* (London: Heinemann, 1968)
10. Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* (London: The Women's Press, 1988)

Any student interested in reviewing a novel that is not listed, must first clear it with the instructor otherwise they will be penalised.

4. Final Paper (worth 35% of the final grade):

The final paper is a research essay intended to test your knowledge on African politics. It can be on any topic in African politics. The paper provides an opportunity for students to research an issue in African politics that is topical and important to them. The essay should be between 10 and 12 double-spaced pages (not including the title page and bibliography of works cited). It should be handed in class on Wednesday December 1, that is, the last day of lectures for the course.

Please Note:

- While it is the responsibility of all students to choose their own topics based on their individual interests, such topics should be cleared with the course director.
- All essays should have a title page indicating name, student number and course number, the name of the instructor, the department and university.
- In terms of formatting, all essays should be doubled-spaced, Times New Roman 12 point fonts, 1-inch margin and should be handed in on the due date in class. (Manipulating the margins or font size will be penalised).
- **The essay is due in class on Thursday, December 1**, that is, the last day of lectures for the course. Barring any extenuating circumstance, all written assignments must be submitted on time, otherwise a 2 per cent penalty will apply each day the essay is late. In extenuating circumstances, students may seek extension, but before the due date, not after.
- For citation and referencing, please use either the **Harvard or Chicago referencing style** for all written work. Failure to follow these instructions will affect your grade.

Students with Special Needs

Students with special needs may request accommodations in accordance with the Senate Policy on Students with Disabilities. Please endeavour, at the earliest opportunity, to advise the Student Accessibility Services (formerly the Learning Assistance Centre) and the course instructor of your special needs so that appropriate arrangements could be made to accommodate such needs. Those who encounter extenuating circumstances which may interfere with the successful completion of the course should, as soon as possible, discuss these circumstances with the course instructor and the Student Accessibility Services.

Lakehead Policy on Academic Dishonesty

Students are expected to uphold the academic honour code at all times and are advised to familiarise themselves with the university policy on academic dishonesty, especially in relation, but not limited, to plagiarism, cheating, impersonation etc. Violation of this policy may lead to serious consequences.

Policy on Electronic Devices

Cell phones are distracting and therefore should be turned off and kept out of sight during lectures. A visible phone will be assumed to be used. In such a scenario, the instructor may ask the offending student to leave the class. Except where prior permission is sought from the instructor, no audio or video recording of lectures is allowed. Where permission is sought and granted, such recordings should be solely for private use.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction: Thinking about African Politics

Readings:

Tuesday, September 6: General Introduction (No assigned readings)

Thursday, September 8

Binyavanga Wainaina, 'How to Write about Africa,' *Granta* 92, (2005):

<http://www.granta.com/Archive/92/How-to-Write-about-Africa/Page-1>

Jack Parson, 'Tarzan, Tim Russert and Me: Teaching about Africa in the United States.' Southeastern Regional Seminar in African Studies (SERSAS), 26-27 March, 2004. <http://www.ecu.edu/african/sersas/Papers/ParsonSpring2004.htm>

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: 'The Danger of a Single Story' (TED Video):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg>

Week 2: Africanism and the Knowledge Question

Readings:

Tuesday, September 13

Zubairu Wai, 'Evolutionism and the Africanist Project' Chapter 1 in *Epistemologies of African Conflicts: Violence, Evolutionism and the War in Sierra Leone* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 1 – 58

Thursday, September 15

V.Y. Mudimbe, 'Discourse of Power and Knowledge of Otherness.' Chapter 1 in his *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 1 – 23

Achille Mbembe, 'Time on the Move.' Introduction to *On the Postcolony* (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 1–23

[Note: September 19 is the Final Date of Registration]

Week 3: The Legacies of Colonialism

Readings:

Tuesday, September 20

A. Adu Boahen (ed.) 'Africa and the Colonial Challenge' and 'European Partition and Conquest of Africa: an Overview' in *UNESCO General History of Africa: Vol. VII Africa under Colonial Domination 1880 – 1935* [Abridged edition] A. Adu Boahen edited, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, for UNESCO, 1990), pp. 1 – 24

Achille Mbembe, 'Of Commandement.' Chapter 1 in *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 24-65

Thursday, September 22

Mahmood Mamdani, 'Decentralized Despotism.' Chapter 2 in *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 37–61

Samir Amin, 'Underdevelopment and Dependence in Black Africa – Origins and Contemporary Forms,' *The Journal of Modern African Studies* vol. 10, no. 4 (1972), pp. 503-24

Week 4: The State in Africa

Readings:

Tuesday, 27 September

Liisa Laakso and Adebayo O. Olukoshi, 'The Crisis of the Post-Colonial Nation-State Projects in Africa,' In *Challenges to the Nation-State in Africa*, Adebayo O. Olukoshi and Liisa Laakso edited. (Uppsala, Sweden: Nordic Africa Institute, 1996), pp. 7 – 39

Mahmood Mamdani, 'Introduction' in *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 3 – 34

Thursday, 29 September

Zubairu Wai, 'On the Banality of Violence: State, Power and the Everyday in Africa' in *Violence in/and the Great Lakes: The Thought of V.Y. Mudimbe and Beyond*, edited by Grant Farred, Leonhard Praeg and Kaseraka Kavwahirehi, (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press), pp. 128-160.

Week 5: Development and Developmentalism

Readings:

Tuesday, 4 October

Paul T. Zeleza, 'Colonial Developmentalism' in his *Manufacturing African Studies and Crises* (Dakar: CODESRIA 1997), pp. 218 – 240.

Zubairu Wai, 'Whither African Development? A Preparatory for an African Alternative Reformulation of the Concept of Development,' *Africa Development* vol. 32, no. 4, (2007), pp.71–98

Thursday, 6 October

Thandika Mkandawire, 'Thinking about Developmental States in Africa,' *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 25, no. 3 (2001), pp. 289 – 313

'Africa rising', *The Economist*, December 3rd 2011;
<http://www.economist.com/node/21541015>

Ndongo Samba Sylla, 'From a marginalised to an emerging Africa? A critical analysis?' *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 41, no. S1 (2014): S7–S25,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2014.996323>

Week 6 (Oct. 11 & 13): Fall Reading Week (No Class)

Week 7 (Oct. 18 & 20): Democracy and Democratisation

Readings:

Tuesday, 18 October

Richard Joseph, 'Democratisation in Africa, After 1989: Comparative and Theoretical Perspectives,' *Comparative Politics* 29, no. 4 (1997), pp. 363 – 82

John S. Saul, "'For Fear of Being Condemned as Old Fashioned': Liberal Democracy vs. Popular Democracy in Africa,' *Review of African Political Economy* 24, no. 73 (1997), pp. 339-353

Said Adejumobi, 'Democratic Performance in Africa: Uneven Progress, Faltering Hopes' in *National Democratic Reforms in Africa: Changes and Challenges*; Said Adejumobi edited (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 1-22

Thursday, 20 October: Map Quiz in class

Week 8 (Oct. 25 & 27): Interrogating Gender

Readings:

October 25

Chandra T. Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,' *Feminist Review* 30 (1988), pp. 61 – 88

October 27

Oyeronke Oyewumi, 'Visualizing the Body: Western Theories and African Subjects' Chapter 1 in her *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (University of Minnesota Press, 1997)

Obioma Nnaemeka, 'Bringing African Women into the Classroom: Rethinking Pedagogy and Epistemology', in *African Gender Studies: A Reader*, edited by Oyeronke Oyewumi (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 51-65

Week 9: The Politics of Ethnicity

Readings:

Tuesday, November 1

Chris Lowe et al, 'Talking about 'Tribe': Moving from Stereotypes to Analysis,' Africa Policy Information Center, Washington, DC, November 1997

http://kora.matrix.msu.edu/files/50/304/32-130-153D-84-Background_Paper_010_opt.pdf

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 'The Myth of *Tribe* in African Politics,' *Transition* 101, (2009), pp. 16-23

Thursday, November 3

Archie Mafeje, 'The Ideology of Tribalism', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* vol. 9, no. 2, (1971), pp. 253-261

Jean-Francois Bayart, 'The Shadow Theatre of Ethnicity' in *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* 2e (London: Polity: 2009), pp. 41-59

[Note: Book Review due in class on Thursday, November 3. Also note that November 7 is the Final Date for Withdrawal from the course without Academic Penalty]

Week 10: Discourse of Violence, Armed Conflicts and Civil Wars

Readings:

Tuesday, November 8

Paul Richards, 'New War: An Ethnographic Approach' Chapter 1 in *No Peace No War: Anthropology of Contemporary Armed Conflicts*, Paul Richards edited. (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press); 1 – 21.

Neil Cooper, 'Picking the Pieces of the Liberal Peaces: Representations of Conflict Economies and the Implication for Policy.' *Security and Dialogue* 36, no. 4 (2005); 463–478

Thursday, November 10

Zubairu Wai, 'Neo-Patrimonialism and the Discourse of State Failure in Africa,' *Review of African Political Economy* vol. 39, no. 131 (2012), pp. 27–43

Christopher Cramer, 'Homo Economicus Goes to War: Methodological Individualism, Rational Choice and the Political Economy of War', *World Development* 30, no. 2, (2002): 1845 – 1864

Week 11: Social Movements and Political Change

Readings:

Tuesday, November 15

Miles Larmer, 'Social Movement Struggles in Africa,' *Review of African Political Economy* vol. 37, no.125 (2010), pp. 251-262

Bénédicte Maccatory, Makama Bawa Oumarou & Marc Poncelet, 'West African Social Movements "Against the High Cost of Living": From the Economic to the Political, from the Global to the National,' *Review of African Political Economy* vol. 37, no.125, (2010), pp. 345-359

Thursday, November 17

Habib Ayebe, 'Social and Political Geography of the Tunisian Revolution: the Alfa Grass Revolution,' *Review of African Political Economy* 38, no. 129 (2011), pp. 467-479

Angela Joya, 'The Egyptian Revolution: Crisis of Neoliberalism and the Potential for Democratic Politics,' *Review of African Political Economy* 38, no. 129 (2011), pp. 367-386

Week 12: Land Grabbing and the New Scramble for Africa

Readings:

Tuesday, November 22

Philip McMichael, 'The land grab and corporate food regime restructuring,' *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. 39, Nos. 3–4, (2012): 681–701

Tania Murray Li, "Centering Labor in the Land Grab Debate," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 38, no.2 (2011), pp. 281-298

Thursday, November 24

Sam Moyo, Paris Yeros and Praveen Jha, 'Imperialism and Primitive Accumulation: Notes on the New Scramble for Africa', *Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy* vol. 1, no. 2 (2012): 181–203

Bikrum Gill, 'Can the River Speak? Epistemological Confrontation in the Rise and Fall of the Land Grab in Gambella, Ethiopia' *Environment and Planning A*, (2015) 1–19; DOI: 10.1177/0308518X15610243

Week 13 (Nov. 29 & Dec 1): Africa and the World

Readings:

Tuesday, November 29

James Ferguson, 'Introduction' in *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 1 – 23

Jean and John L. Comaroff, 'Theory from the South' Chapter 1 in their *Theory from the South, or How Euro-America is Evolving Toward Africa* (London: Paradigm Publishers, 2012), pp. 1-49

Thursday, December 1

Zubairu Wai, 'Empire's New Clothes: Africa, Liberal Interventionism and Contemporary World Order' *Review of African Political Economy* 41, no. 142, (2014) 1-17

Denis M. Tull, 'China's Engagement in Africa: Scope, Significance, and Consequences' *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 44, no. 3 (2006), pp. 459-479

**[Note: Final paper due at the end of class on 1 December, 2016]
(Examination Period: 8-18 December, 2016. There will be no examination
for this course).**